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RESTORATION REVIEW

The New Creation . . .

THE NEW COMMANDMENT

I give you a new commandment love one another; as I have loved you, so you are to love one another. If there is this love among you, then all will know that you are my disciples. —John 13:34-35

The abundant life that Jesus makes possible for mankind implies a newness and freshness that the world never knew before. Jesus came to make all things new. His work in men's hearts makes for a new creation. As the apostle puts it: "When anyone is united to Christ, there is a new world; the old order has gone, and a new order has already begun" (2 Cor. 5:17). At the heart of the new order is the new commandment that Jesus gave his disciples.

The commandment is not new in the sense that there were no previous instructions about love, for we know that the Old Covenant scriptures are replete with such information. It is a new kind of love that he is talking about, a love that could be manifested only by the Christ himself. The Greek word *kainos* suggests newness in the sense of a more recent and fresh context for an old idea. It is like "new world" in the passage above, implying that once a man's life is hid with Christ in God that the old world in which he has been living takes on an entirely new look. His job may be the same job, his family may be the same family, and his bank account the same bank account; but his personality has undergone such a transformation that his job, family, and money take on a freshness of meaning that he never before experienced.

This is what Jesus does to everything he touches. The commandment to love is not so much a command as it is his own example. It was new because by his life he gave it a freshness and meaning that it could never have had without him. It was certainly no legal command after the order of Moses. It takes its newness from Jesus' statement "As I have loved you, so you are to love one another." They needed no command as such, but only his majestic demonstration. Paul is talking in similar terms when he says: "About love for our brotherhood you need no words of mine, for you are yourselves taught by God to love one another" (1 Thess. 4:9). He is saying that learning Christian love is not a matter of words or commands, but by demonstration. God has manifested his love by the cross. Paul is

pointing to the cross and saying "God loves like that!"

Jesus brought a new love into the world, *qualitatively* new. Not only was it faultless and perfect, but it reached out to man with the intention of making him whole, even when he himself is most unloving and undeserving. This is the light of the new world that Jesus illuminates and without that light it is as dark and hopeless as the old world.

Some commentators suggest that the new commandment that Jesus gives was intended only for his disciples, that there is no way for the rest of us to appreciate what Jesus is saying. This viewpoint is a reasonable one, for only the disciples were with Jesus personally, living with him daily and witnessing first hand the force of those words "As I have loved you . . ." We have all dreamed of being with Jesus in the same way Peter, James, and John were, to walk and talk with him, and to look into his face when he taught. It must have been a breathtaking experience to have been with the Master as he responded to the Pharisees, healed the sick, and fished with the disciples. To have been able to have said as you watched him, "I am in the presence of the Son of God himself," would have been an unbearable thrill to the soul. We could not all be called to be apostles, and it is proper that their names should be inscribed upon the walls of the eternal city. And it just may be that the new commandment was for them in a way that it could never be for us. There was an aura about Jesus' presence that profoundly effected people. Think what it must have been like to have lived with him! Surely his apostles knew his love in a way that reaches beyond the rest of us.

But we must not forget that in departing from this world he promised that we would not be left as orphans, but that the Holy Spirit would come to be with us and in us. Our bodies are the shrine for his indwelling. And the Holy Spirit *is* the Spirit of the Christ, which means that Jesus can be as real to us as he has ever been to anyone. The first gift of the Spirit is the gift of love, so the new commandment that Jesus gave to his apostles is for us also.

John himself was later writing to those, like ourselves, who had never known Jesus in the flesh, and he spoke to them of the new commandment: "It is a new command I am giving you—new in the sense that the darkness is passing and the real light already shines. Christ has made this true, and it is true in your own experience" (1 John 2:8).

It is true in your own experience, he says. This is when the new commandment has meaning, when the Master's love flows through us into the lives of others. The darkness of hate, distrust, fear, and envy fades, and

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"the real light" of love takes over. Love is thus the answer to our fractured and divided brotherhood. We do indeed need an arbiter to preside over our efforts to unite, and that arbiter must be the new commandment to love one another as Jesus loves us. This is what Paul is saying in Col. 3:14-15: "To crown all, there must be love, to bind all together and complete the whole. Let Christ's peace be arbiter in your hearts; to this peace you were called as members of a single body."

Some are complaining that there must be a recognized authority to settle the matters upon which we are divided. This is of course the Bible, we are told, which for all practical purposes comes to mean each one's own interpretation of the Bible. It is the Bible itself that tells us what the recognized authority should be. An arbiter is one "having absolute power of judging and determining," to quote Webster. And Paul makes it clear what that arbiter is: "Let Christ's peace be arbiter in your hearts."

So divided are we that an observer might suppose that God had commanded us to divide. But we all know that he has rather called us into "a single body," and in the above passage the apostle observes that God has also called us to peace. These are the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, and peace, and they are God's way of making the body of Christ whole again.

The new commandment is the way from death to life. As 1 John 3:14 puts it: "We for our part have crossed over from death to life; this we know, because we love our brothers." John goes on to say that the man that does not love his brother is yet in the realm of darkness. The darkness that knows no love is the darkness that has long kept us a divided people.

As important as anything else about the new commandment is that obedience to it would serve as a testimony to the world that the disciples were truly followers of the Christ. It is as if Jesus were saying that if they loved each other everything else would take care of itself. Their love would be a proclamation to the world that Jesus does indeed abide in his people. Love can do what orthodoxy can never do.

It was so with the primitive Christians. Their love for each other was the badge of their discipleship. There is a mystery to Christian love, a bond that the disciples themselves can understand, but which is incomprehensible to the world. Yet the power of the mystery is evident even to the stranger. The world may not understand the love, but they recognize it when it is manifest in human hearts. Julian, who scoffed at Christianity, once remarked: "Their master has implanted the belief in them that they are all brethren," and another outsider, Minucius Felix was amazed that "They love each other even without being acquainted with each other." It was a well-known pagan remark about the Christians in Rome: "These miserable creatures, how they love one another!"

Perhaps we can say that the new commandment is new because it never grows old. It will do for our generation what it has always done when properly honored. We have been

guilty of insisting upon law in a loveless manner, while much of the world around us has been insisting upon love in a lawless manner. The new commandment should set us straight.—*the Editor*

THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Those of us who teach philosophy find the word *essence* to be useful in getting to the inside of tough intellectual problems. The term may be equally helpful in probing the meaning of fellowship. In searching for the essence of fellowship we are looking for the heart of it, for that, without which, fellowship would no longer be fellowship.

Aristotle says that the essence of a thing is its *soul* or *whatness,* such as the soul of a knife would be that it cuts or that the soul of a pen is that it writes. Other thinkers identify essence as the *being* or *power* of a thing; or even the universal possibility of a thing. The essence of an acorn, therefore, would be its potential for becoming an oak.

It makes for interesting discussion among college students to raise the question of the essence of man. One student was getting at it when she pointed out that the essence of her own selfhood was "whatever it is, if I should lose it, I would no longer be me." She could lose her eyes, ears, and power of speech and still be herself. She could even lose her limbs, as well as all her possessions, and still be a person. She mentioned someone who was institutionalized, a serious case of psychosis, whom friends referred to in the past tense (He *was* such a fine person), as an example of one who has lost the essence of being human. So it has to do with mind and soul.

When Aristotle speaks of the essence of man, he refers to "proper function," as in the case of the knife or pen. A pen that does not write has lost its essence and is no longer truly a pen. So a man who does not function according to his *unique* character is not truly man. Man may hunt, build houses, reproduce his species, and wage war; but this is not *unique,* for the animals do likewise. Man's uniqueness is his power to think critically about himself and his world, and through intellectual effort to gain control of his environment. So people who behave only as animals are not truly human beings, for they have forfeited their essence, their proper function, according to Aristotle. It raises interesting questions about such folk as feral children (those who wander from civilization and are raised by animals), as to whether they are really human. Then the question moves on to the multitudes of people who live more like animals than intelligent human beings.

Aristotle's point is that if an acorn is not truly an acorn if it has no power to produce an oak, so a man is not truly man if he is not behaving in those ways commensurate with his nature. There is more to being a person than merely having the *physical* characteristics. The existentialists step in here and insist that it is not enough to live, for to really *be* one must exist. And so the likes of Jean Paul Sartre talk of "Existence precedes essence." Most of us like to tell folk that they are not really living but only existing, but Sartre would turn it around and insist that people are only living and not really existing. All this has to do with the *essence* of being a person.

It would be helpful if a bunch of us could get together, those of us representing our tragically divided brotherhood, and have this kind of critical discussion on *the essence of fellowship.* We speak in strange language about fellowship. Recently a brother was criticizing a lesson I had presented, and he said: "He fellowships anything and everybody." Obviously I did not succeed in getting my point over to him. It would be helpful to lay the matter out on the table before us and be precise as to what is meant by fellowship when used in such a context. He says I fellowship *everything.* Does this include doctrines like premillennialism and fundamentalism? Does it include things like instrumental music, Sunday School literature, and cups? If so, then fellowship is necessarily related to doctrines and things, and we are likely to have as many different fellowships as there are things and doctrines.

He says I fellowship *everybody,* a reference that makes fellowship even more ambiguous. It sounds as if it is something that I *do* or *don't do* to a person, something that I extend and withdraw at will. That it is a word belonging to the family of *ship* terms should help to correct this impression. We may ask a man if Bill Jones is a partner with him in his business. We would be surprised to hear the man say, "No, I do not partnership Bill Jones." It would be even more awkward to apply it to a thing, such as: "I'm not driving that old Ford. I don't partnership it."

Or take companionship. We would never say "Don't companionship that man," or "We don't companionship that night club." These *ship* words imply a relationship between persons or as Webster indicates they show state or condition. Any "ship" relationship would suggest that people are in the same state or condition. So I would say "He and I enjoy a beautiful friendship" but never "I friendship him." We Christians would say "We share sonship with Jesus," but never "We sonship Jesus."

Then why do we have this hangup on fellowship. The Bible speaks of "the fellowship of the Spirit," but it would be confusing to find it saying "We fellowship the Spirit." It says also "We have fellowship one with another," which is very different from saying "We fellowship one another." If we *have* something together, it is likely provided by someone else, but if fellowship is ours to give and withdraw, it becomes a commodity rather than a state. Even in such language as "You have fellowship with demons," indicated in 1 Cor. 10:20, the idea is that of one moving into the same state or relationship with the demons. To say "You fellowship demons" would be as meaningless as "Tom friendships Jim."

This helps our cause in getting to the essence of fellowship, for we can see that it has to do with state or relationship. Better still, it is a *qualitative* relationship rather than quantitative, for "ship" can be between two people or two million. It is a certain kind of relationship that puts them in the same state. When two men take on certain common qualities, they might be referred to as sharing a partnership. It is like the "hood" words. You become my neighbor by moving close to me, so that we share certain things in common. But we would never say "We started neighborhooding one another last summer."

Even yet we are not ready to put a finger on the precise point of Christian fellowship. As we might do in studying the essence of man, let's look for a moment at what fellowship is *not,* that is, the qualities that could be missing and we would still have fellowship.

1. *Fellowship is not a matter of approval or endorsement.*

This is to say that we might not *approve* of a person's conduct or *endorse* the positions he holds and still be in the fellowship with him. Indeed, fellowship might be sweeter and more meaningful if we did approve, but it is not *necessary* to the relationship. The Bible is replete with examples of this. Paul certainly did not approve of Peter on some occasions, rebuking him to his face as he did, but they remained in the fellowship together. The apostles were always disagreeing, sometimes rather bitterly, but this did not impair fellowship. And so it is with all the "hoods" and "ships" of life. Brothers in a family seldom agree, but still there is brotherhood. Business partners often have a time of it, but still there is partnership.

2. *Fellowship is not a matter of agreement on doctrine or opinions.*

Look at the congregation at Corinth with all its disagreements, a condition that reached serious proportions. But this did not keep Paul from writing that "You were called into the fellowship of his Son" and "You are the body of Christ." It is true that factious behavior placed a great strain upon fellowship, as foul business practices do to a partnership, but it did not nullify the relationship that they shared in the Christ. If fellowship were dependent upon agreement in ideas, doctrines, and practices, then the Corinthians could never have been called by God into the fellowship, for their backgrounds were so different that they could never have seen everything alike. In Cor. 6 Paul says that they came out of a background of thievery, homosexuality, idolatry, and drunkenness. It would be impossible to get a unanimity of viewpoint out of a crowd like that. But the miracle of grace is that out of such a checkered background, that included the noble as well as the ignoble, God could bring them all into relationship with His Son. Unity in diversity! And can there really be any other kind?

3. *Fellowship is not a matter of being right or wrong doctrinally.*

Nothing is made plainer than Paul's language in Romans 14, where he is saying that one brother believes one thing, while another brother believes

something else, and obviously they think each other to be wrong and themselves right. "One man will have faith enough to eat all kinds of food, while a weaker man eats only vegetables," he says, "The man who eats must not hold in contempt the man who does not, and he who does not eat must not pass judgement on the one who does; for God has accepted him." Here we have the basis of fellowship: *God has accepted him.*

If God accepts him as a son, I am to accept him as a brother, regardless of how right or wrong he may be, which I can judge only by the way he agrees with my own position! The point is that God claims us as his children even when we are wrong, and so we are to accept each other.

We get hung up on this bit about "brothers-in-error," as if there were some other kind. Were not Paul and Peter in error? At least Paul says Peter stood condemned, and Peter says Paul writes stuff that you can't understand. If fellowship depends on being right about everything, then a person cannot be in fellowship even with himself. If we were not all wrong at one time or another, and a bit stubborn along with it, there would be no place for forbearance.

The admonition to "forbear one another" indicates that there is sometimes a lot to endure from each other. This we do because we are in the fellowship together, not to make the fellowship possible. Fellowship would therefore be no greater, or more extensive, between two brothers that agree on hardly anything except their common love for Jesus. Just as in my father's family. Some of us seem to see eye-to-eye on most things of common interest, while others hold widely divergent views. But those who differ with me are no less my brothers.

4. *Fellowship is not a matter of knowledge.*

One can enjoy the fellowship that is in Christ and be a grossly ignorant man, including an ignorance of the Bible. So it was in the primitive congregation, where they did not yet have the Bible. Surely many could not even read, being slaves and in poverty. But even the ignorant man can have faith and be in love, and it is this that made fellowship possible. Christ was their wisdom. They trusted Him and they loved each other. Paul was adamant with the Corinthians about the limitations of knowledge. It will fail when the pressures come, and so love is the gift to desire above all others.

We set up a standard of knowledge in our measure of the bounds of fellowship. One must understand certain things about the church, and certainly he must understand that baptism is for the remission of sins. It was not so with the early Christians. Baptism was an act of faith, not a matter of knowledge.

Surely we are urged to "grow in knowledge" and the knowledge of the Lord is a Christian virtue. But it is fellowship that makes such growth possible, and not the growth that makes the fellowship possible. A family may have a retarded child, but this in no wise threatens his sonship with the other children. God too has retarded children, many who will never

be able to do much growing, but all such are no less our brothers in the Lord.

If the essence of fellowship is not any of these things, then what is it? *The essence of fellowship is sharing the common life.* There can be fellowship where there is disagreement, disapproval, ignorance, and differences in doctrine and opinion; but there can be no fellowship apart from *sharing. Sharing* gets to the heart of the meaning of *koinonia,* the Greek term for fellowship. ***The New English Bible*** has some beautiful renditions of the verses on fellowship. Notice how it uses the term *sharing* to express the idea:

"It is God himself who called you to share in the life of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Cor. 1:9)

"If then our common life in Christ yields anything to stir the heart, any loving consolation, any sharing of the Spirit, any warmth of affection or compassion, fill up my cup of happiness by thinking and feeling alike." (Philip. 2:1-2)

(This verse is especially helpful in that it shows that the common life in Christ and the sharing of the Spirit must first be a reality, then can come some measure of thinking and feeling alike. We have it the other way around, that brethren must first think and feel alike about organs and societies, then can come the fellowship.)

"What we have seen and heard we declare to you, so that you and we together may share in a common life, that life which we share with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:3)

"If we claim to be sharing in his life while we walk in the dark, our words and our lives are a lie; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, then we share together a common life, and we are being cleansed from every sin by the blood of Jesus his Son." (1 John 1:6-7)

"They met constantly to hear the apostles teach, and to share the common life, to break bread, and to pray." (Acts 2:42)

It is evident enough that if all these years we had had access only to the likes of *The New English Bible* (and what a blessing that would have been!), we would never have been guilty of such talk as "We don't fellowship the instrument," or "We at Eastside don't fellowship the Westside congregation." Such talk makes fellowship mean *endorsement* or *approval,* which is not remotely related to the idea of *koinonia.* When the folk at Eastside are asked, "Do you share the common life in Christ with those at Westside?," the answer may be different. The question is at least different. Eastside may disagree or disapprove of some things at Westside, but still share the common life with them.

So we suggest a moratorium on the use of the word *fellowship,* which does not even appear in *The New English Bible.* Let's use "share the common life" instead. We'll be more scriptural, and we'll discard some bad habits. It is safe to assume that no one will be saying "I don't share the common life with the instrument."

This will do something else for us, for it will raise serious questions about whether we truly share the common life in Jesus with those we have been claiming "to fellowship." If fellowship has been mainly a matter of endorsement, there may have been little real sharing. To agree on certain doctrines that make some particular party distinctive is one thing; to share together a life of hope, hardship, reprisals, and victory is something else. To sit together in a million dollar building, presumably believing everything alike, and listen to someone sermonize on the party line is not sharing the common life. Sharing the common life is being with the sick and distressed together, going to the ghetto together, joining efforts in a work of love. It is enjoying and loving Jesus together. It is weeping, laughing, and singing together. It is the joy of being with each other, for it is like being with Jesus himself.

So, to go back to the complaint of the existentialists, who tell us that we're not really existing but only living, we might register our concern this way: We are not really sharing the common life, for we're only "fellowshipping" one another.—*the Editor*

GOD MAKES ME LAUGH

God has given me good reason to laugh, and everybody who hears will laugh with me.—Gen. 21:6

If ever there was a time the world needed to laugh, it is now. If ever God's community on earth needed to realize the joy that is in Christ, it is now. If ever we all needed to praise God from whom all blessings come, it is now. The one who spoke the above words was taught of God to laugh, and that amidst almost impossible circumstances. The story says something important to us.

It is the story of Sarah, the wife of Abraham, who gave birth to the child of promise when she was about 90 years old. Her childlessness had been such a burden to her that she persuaded Abraham to take Hagar as a secondary wife, which led to the birth of Ishmael. But it was still God's intention that Sarah, not Hagar, should be the mother of the children of promise.

Sarah was blessed with those things that most women would envy. She was so beautiful that Abraham made it a habit to lie about her being his wife, lest the princes of Egypt and Gerar dispose of him and take her into their harem. She was married to a rich man, who happened to be her half-brother. And she was robust and healthy, living to the ripe age of 127. But she was childless, and this was a doubly bitter fate since her husband's destiny was dependent upon his fathering a child.

There were those endless years of waiting, and her hopes dimmed that she would ever be able to present a son to Abraham. It was a despair that with the passing of the years finally embittered her. She waited until she was 75 before suggesting to her husband that her handmaid might do

what she could not. What agony she must have suffered in making such a decision!

Laughter is a window through which we can look into one's innermost self. A book in my library, written by a psychiatrist, contends that one's mental health can be measured by his capacity to laugh, and especially by what it is that causes him to laugh. The book includes scores of cartoons, and as the reader peruses these he will most surely laugh—at some of them at least. I have used this book in my college classes, and I have found it as the author said it would be: that some students see nothing funny at all about many of the cartoons, while others can hardly control themselves. Some of the cartoons, for example, have a way of deflating the ego, and those who are already preoccupied with trying every means possible to keep their egoism in tact find little to laugh about. The author observes that there is, unfortunately, little laughter in a mental hospital. He also contends that laughter is a means of releasing tension and a sign that one is not taking himself too seriously.

The Spanish philosopher George Santayana put laughter into this perspective when he wrote: "The young man who has not wept is a savage, and the old man who will not laugh is a fool." They say that Lincoln found time for laughter even amidst the crisis that divided the union, so much that Stanton and others spoke of him as "that jokester in the White House." But another philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, saw in laughter what Stanton was blind to, for he said: "Nothing, no experience good or bad, no belief, no cause is in itself momentous enough to monopolize the whole of life to the exclusion of laughter." And Elton Trueblood sees so much humour in the life of our Lord that he wrote a book on *The Humour of Christ.*

That Sarah became bitter about it all is suggested in the incident of the messengers of the Lord informing Abraham that his wife would bear a son. Sarah was listening from a nearby tent, and the record says that she "laughed to herself." Her words are pathetic, coming from one who had a more than ordinary maternal instinct: "Shall I indeed bear a child when I am old?" It is as if she said, crying out in bitterness: *Now that I am an old woman you talk of my having a baby!*

It was a laugh of resentment. But she further shows her humanity as well as her womanhood when she lied about laughing, once the messengers called her hand for questioning the power of God. It is, however, a tender part of the story, for Sarah, despite her deep hurt, did not want to be distrustful of God. And after all her laughter was under her breath, a kind of silent rebuke to what fate had handed her. When the messengers called her hand, discerning her hidden laughter, she realized she was in the presence of God, and so "Sarah lied because she was frightened, and denied that she had laughed." It was all so very human. Apparently the Lord did not hold it against her, for the promise was not withdrawn, and it was not long until she became the mother of a baby boy.

Sarah a mother at 90 years of age! And after all those years of hoping and of dying hopes.

So the laugh of derision and pessimism gives way to the laugh of joy and triumph. The record says that "The Lord showed favour to Sarah as he had promised, and made good what he had said about her." And so she laughed the laugh of victory. "God has given me good reason to laugh," she said, "and everybody who hears will laugh with me."

Bob Hope is loved by millions because he makes them laugh, but he is also something of a philosopher when he says: "Maybe if we could all laugh alike, and laugh at the same time, this world of ours wouldn't be able to find so many things to squabble about." Might that not apply to our divided brotherhood as well as to our divided world?

It is Sarah's *first* laugh that is especially interesting, which appears to be in derision. Nietzsche may speak to this when he says: "Man alone suffers so excruciatingly in the world that he was compelled to invent laughter." And that may explain a joking Lincoln in the White House as well as a laughing Sarah in her tent.

It is God that gives us laughter, which is more of an attitude toward life than it is chuckling sounds from the throat. Isaac's name, which the Lord himself gave, has the ring of laughter about it, meaning as it does *God's laughter.* And so, when Sarah bundled little Isaac into her arms, her cry was especially meaningful: *God makes me laugh!*

What a joy it must have been to her! Denied motherhood all of her life, her fondest dreams were now a reality. She held her infant son on her breast, feeling his heartbeat and the warmth of his body. He was Isaac, God's laughter, the only blessing she ever really longed for. God had promised and now it was real. What drama it is! Her laughter was, therefore, a cry of praise to God that He had touched her life so gloriously. Despite her years there must have been a glorious radiance to her countenance, and she became young again. God's laughter added 37 years more to her life.

Even though God promises to give all of us our Isaacs, religion remains both boring and fearful to many of us. We know too little of the joy of the Holy Spirit. Supposing that we are under the yoke of a hard taskmaster, we are scared to live and afraid to die. God will put laughter in our hearts once we see clearly the beauty of His love. Joy is God's gift for all His disciples, but we are too fearful of His wrath to appropriate it.

More than 50 times in the New Testament scriptures alone there are references to joy. We are even told to "be glad and dance with joy" when we are hated for Christ's sake, for our reward will be great (Lk. 6:23). Paul speaks assuringly of "the God of hope who will fill you with all joy and peace," (Rom. 15:13) and Luke the historian tells us that the early disciples were "filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 13:52)

Joy and the Holy Spirit are often

connected in this way. Joy is a gift of the Spirit (Gal. 5:19), and we are told that the kingdom of God consists of "justice, peace, and joy, inspired by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:17). And 1 Thess. 1:6 tells us that joy is in the Holy Spirit. It could well be, therefore, that our reluctance to open ourselves to the motivating power of the Holy Spirit denies us of that joy that is found only in Him.

But the joy of the Holy Spirit is only for him who is ready to forget self in the presence of God. John prepared the way for Jesus, and a mighty forerunner he was, attracting followers in droves. But when Jesus appeared, John was ready to step aside: "As he grows greater, I must grow less," he said, and it was this that made it possible for him to say "This joy, this perfect joy, is now mine" (John 3:29).

With such joy in our hearts God's laughter will mark our course, and God's praises will be upon our lips. It was so with Sarah, for in praising God for Isaac she invited the whole world to laugh with her. It says something to Christian witness, for if we bear to the world a religion that makes us radiant with the Holy Spirit, it will light up all the dark places we may go.

It gives meaning to the lines by Ella Wheeler Wilcox:

Laugh, and the world laughs with you;
Weep, and you weep alone,
For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth,
But has trouble enough of its own.

—the Editor

BLACK AND SOUND

A news item in one of our journals on the right, from up North, caught my eye. It tells of the plight of a brother in Arkansas whose wife has been ill for several years. After suffering from cancer for many years, the dear sister is now in the hospital with pneumonia. The brother is described as "the only sound negro preacher in Fort Smith."

Ouida and I decided that we wanted to help this couple in their distress. In our letter to the brother we explained that it was not because he was *sound* that we wanted to help, nor because he and his wife were Negroes, but only because they were a brother and sister in the Lord. We would consider it just as great a blessing to be able to help, I pointed out, if they were *unsound!* Or even *white!*

The news item reminded me of some statements from Ralph Sweet, whose *Christian Chronicle* came in the same mail. "White racism in churches of Christ is a fact," writes Ralph. "Racism is a sin! It isn't a 'weakness' or a 'shortcoming.' It is a sin! It exists in the hearts of black and white Christians."

Our brother editor up North will think I am most unfair in suggesting that his news item about a brother in

trouble, written out of the goodness of his heart, is to any degree racist. It is not a vicious racism, to be sure, but there is little racism that is vicious anyway. It is the insidious kind that can have a benevolent touch to it. Many a racist has been willing to go into his pocket to help "the nigger church" across town, and many a white supremacist has deep affection for "the colored folks" that work for him. Philanthropy and racism are not incompatible. One doesn't have to kick a black man down the stairs in order to be a racist.

The point calls for a definition of *racism.* Webster's "the assumption of inherent racial superiority and consequent discrimination" is a helpful description. But to a Christian the meaning goes even deeper, for it would simply be letting race or color make any difference at all in our thinking about a person. The Jews in the days of early Christianity were racists because of their attitude toward the Gentiles, and it was because Jesus made no such racial distinction that he got in trouble with them. The Bible teaches us that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free; and so in our own time we would add: *in Christ there is neither black nor white.*

Other news items on the same page point up the oblique kind of racism I have in mind. A church in Wisconsin is "looking for a man to work with them." Would we not be surprised if it read: "Looking for a *white* man to work with them"? A church in California is "seeking a gospel preacher," reads another notice. We all know that this means a *white* gospel preacher, and any black preacher reading the ad would know better than to apply. It would distinctly say *black* preacher, if for some strange reason they wanted a Negro. This means that Churches of Christ are *white.* To what degree we may reach out into the black world, we make it clear, as for a century we have done with toilet doors, by the label "Colored Only."

On this news sheet I count eleven references to churches and individuals before the notice about "the only sound negro preacher in Fort Smith." Not once is anything said about their being *white.* They are simply brothers and sisters. Then why in item number 12 is it a "sound negro preacher?" Why not just a "sound preacher," if indeed we must be distinguished as *sound* and *unsound?*

This *sound* bit only reveals that we are sectarian as well as racist. We may assume that there are other "negro preachers" in Fort Smith, but they are not sound, and of course there are other "sound preachers," but they are not *black.* What a mess we have made of the principle of oneness in Christ! We may assume that any *unsound* Negro preachers in Fort Smith would never make the news page of the journal, even if he and his wife both had cancer. It would be good enough for him, being unsound.

Being *sound* is an awful condition for a Christian, for this makes him more like the Pharisees than like Jesus. The Pharisees were *sound* and Jesus was *unsound.* That is why they killed him. Had he just been *sound* he could have avoided the cross. When

someone starts calling you *sound,* that is the time to stop and take stock of yourself.

If we could but talk about Christ-likeness more and soundness less! It is clear enough that God wants us to be like Christ. I like the NEB rendition of 2 Cor. 3:18: "We all reflect as in a mirror the splendour of the Lord; thus we are transfigured in his likeness, from splendour to splendour." There is no such implication about *soundness,* which is currently used by factious brethren to identify their own kind.

Let us have more references to "Christ-like preacher" and "a Christ-like church" and less to *sound* preachers and churches. Truth is that one may be *sound* without being Christ-like, and when one is Christ-like he is almost certainly not to be *sound.*

So I take it that the plea for help for the Arkansas brother is saying something like this: *there is a nice colored man in Ft. Smith, whose wife is in the hospital, the only negro preacher of our party in town, so let's do all we can to help him.*

It is bad enough for a man to be black in our divided brotherhood. God forbid that he has to be both black and sound!—*the Editor*

THE PATHOLOGY OF EXCLUSIONISM

CURTIS LYDIC

Recently I have been reading a book entitled *The Ethics of Sex* by Helmut Thielicke. From it I have gained fresh insight into human sexuality and a new appreciation for marriage. I would recommend it highly as a statement of Christian ethics in an area of life the ethics of which have been rather fuzzily conceived at best.

Isn't it wonderful that God has blessed a host of men and women with special ability to penetrate some of the deeper things of spiritual life and to articulate so effecively what they find. And isn't it grand that He has made so much of our care and feeding a matter of sharing with one another, so that our fellowship is enriched and strengthened concurrently with our individual spirits! But it is precisely in connection with this point that a peculiarity of my brothers in the Churches of Christ has nagged at me. Members of the Churches of Christ who do not have something against reading are certainly aware of the good work of persons like William Barclay, C. S. Lewis, J. B. Phillips, Ruth Paxson, Rachel Hendershot, Thielicke, and others of the multitude of contributors to contemporary Christian literature. The problem, for loyal Church of Christ people, is how to regard these authors. *Are they Christians?* The process of growth by which some of us have become able to accept them as Christians has been slow and agonizing. There were many questions which had to be answered. In the eyes of many, those who have become so accepting have not *grown,* but digressed in the direction of "liberalism," and have become kissing kin with Unitarians and other infidels.

For the past three years I served on the faculty of a premillenial Church of Christ college. I found the people of the premillenial group on the whole much more tolerant and free than my acquaintances in the "regular" Church of Christ. Even so, certain men whose works were consistently to be found in the libraries of these brothers, and were certainly in the college library, could not have been hired to teach the Word of God in the college. It is nevertheless a tribute to the tolerance of these people that men like myself were permitted to teach who would hire a C. S. Lewis or an R. A. Torrey, if such men were available and the decision were ours.

Such a policy of exclusion from the ministerial fellowship is quite characteristic of the Churches of Christ. Let us make no mistake about it, it is a political matter. It is not something the Holy Spirit does to seal the body against invasion by the alien agents of spiritual disease; it is something the sect does to protect its particular institutional interests. One member of our college board was honest enough to admit the basis of his concern over what the board generally considered a "liberal" trend in the college: he said that if the trend continued unchecked he could foresee an end to the existence of the premillenial Church of Christ as a distinct group. If all the leaders of the Churches of Christ were as honest, it would be generally admitted that this is indeed the thing at stake. In the interest of survival, the leaders of the sect formulate a rather careful defense system; careful because in the context of a theoretically strict adherence to the written Word there are only a limited number of defensive measures possible. Whatever they do must either be sufficiently "scriptural" to stand up in the court of the legalists or be sufficiently subtle to be difficult to identify as "unscriptural."

In describing *agape* to the Corinthians, Paul said that "love seeketh not her own." In contrast the sectarian spirit which prevails in Church of Christ leadership holds "our thing" (in Italian, *cosa nostra*) to be most important. And "our thing" means, more than anything else, *power.* It reminds one of the Jewish establishment in Jerusalem, who protected their thing against the threat of an emergent genuine Messiah.

An institution (or a person) assumes a political stance because of a sense of political necessity, and political necessity centers upon one or more of the following considerations: (1) the achievement of some goal, (2) economy of means, or (3) the aversion of some threatened harm or deprivation. The last of these is also the most negative; it is the basis of every personal, institutional, or community defense system, from a thumbed nose to the Distant Early Warning Line. In the case of the scribes and Pharisees, they were defending against the loss of their hitherto secure leadership status, the deprivation of their power to control large numbers of people and to throw people out of the synagogue. Jesus, to use imagery he used, threat-

ened to tear down their playhouse. He threatened to disrupt the infantile but deadly serious games of the racketeers, whether in the temple, or in the marketplace, or in their houses.

Human reaction to such threat is the thing which suggests the term *pathology* in the title of this paper. The term refers, in psychological parlance, to a combination of causative factors producing abnormal behavior. In Christian psychology, there is no separating behavior from spiritual condition; hence, it is not a matter of normality but of spiritual health. Further, no deviation from the way of the Spirit of God can be considered healthy; so, any spiritually deviant behavior must have a pathology.

I am convinced that there are only a few *basic* elements in the pathology of any behavior symptomatic of spiritual ill health, and that these are identifiable at the instinctual level of unregenerate human nature. Another way of saying this is that they are at a primitive emotional level. At the primitive emotional level, we *hate what poses a threat* to us, whether it threatens our physical existence, our basic emotional security, or threatens to deprive us of something we wish to keep or to deny us something we wish to gain. In the face of threat, unregenerate human nature has two alternatives: control or eliminate. Gaining control over the threatening thing can actually produce gain, so that is normally preferable. But failing in control, the impulse to destroy is quick and powerful.

I recently watched, with considerable awe, a television special on wolves. One portion of the program showed an adult male wolf attacking a man. That seems hardly surprising, but it happens that both the male wolf and his mate were raised in captivity, were accustomed to humans, and were not in the least vicious. The attack was precipitated quite innocently by the man's stepping between the male and his mate (the female happened to be in heat). The attack was sudden and terrifying. The combined efforts of two men were inadequate to keep the wolf from his "enemy." Only when the victim affected the behavior of *submission* (whining and cowering as younger wolves do in the presence of a dominant male) did the wolf desist and become calm. Being free from the malice so characteristic of humans, the wolf probably would have given warning if he could have done so. Being unable to do so, he acted in a very "straightforward" way according to the law of his kind (a sort of animal integrity which seems absolutely reliable, and which makes Paul's metaphor in Acts 20:29 something of an insult to these creatures). One knows where he stands with such fellows, given a bit of experience!

Humans, on the other hand (including many Christians), are devious and malicious. Instead of being able to depend on their being open and honest, one may depend on their being guarded, evasive, and noncommunicative. One may also depend on their being ready to attack without warning, when one wittingly or unwittingly steps between them and the objects of their desire (see James 4: 1ff.). Consider the following example:

A friend of mine was invited to conduct a three-day meeting for a certain Church of Christ. He is not of Church of Christ background, nor yet of "Restoration Movement" background. (He may be thus a "second-class Christian," nevertheless he *is* a Christian!). He is a forceful, highly effective preacher of the Word, but both his style and his vocabulary are quite different from that to which Church of Christ people are accustomed. The combination of an unusual style with an unusual bluntness proved startling to the congregation, to say the least. It was interesting to see the shuffling which took place to get the defenses set up. A fairly young woman in the congregation assumed the responsibility of cutting this young man down to size. After the sermon, and after some unusually spontaneous responses from others, this lady said, "Who is this man, anyway? Was that *the Bible* he was using [he was reading from the *Living New Testament]?* She went on in a very condescending tone to explain that these people, it must be understood, were the "old guard" of the church, and these strange things were difficult for "us" to accept. Afterward, outside the meeting house, she called this man "a devil."

Everything this woman said, in attempting to protect her group against the unwelcome message, was an expression of rejection of the messenger. "Who is he?" "*We* have difficulty accepting *strange* things. There is also the implication that strange things (or persons) need not be accepted; we are quite justified in holding strictly to our own.

The reaction to a lippy, troublesome Church of Christ preacher would also be hostile, but quite different. Membership in a group provides built-in control, because few people may not be made to think twice before jeopardizing their status with the group. The occasional person who does not belong to the group and has no desire to join it cannot be controlled by group pressure. The only alternative the group has is to destroy, or rid itself of, the offender. In this case, it was obvious that the visiting speaker could not be controlled, so that the next effort was to attempt to drive him away by ridicule, insult, and intimidation. The same thing happened to Jesus.

The pathology of exclusionism is a montage of distinct but closely related factors. Looking beyond the thrusts and parries, the feints and jabs, the half-nelsons, the checks and checkmates of the power struggle itself, beyond the resentments and hostilities, we will be able to identify the malignancy which is in the very marrow of the bone: ***fear,*** and an unsubdued *arrogance.*

By *arrogance* I mean the rebellious, self-assertive spirit that caused the fall of Lucifer, the spirit which refuses to acknowledge the superiority of any other, whether he be creature or Creator. This arrogance serves as the deterrent to a proper spiritual response. We shall see how it so functions.

"Fear," writes John (1 John 4:18), "has to do with punishment." (RSV) Or, as Phillips phrases it, "fear always contains some of the torture of feeling guilty." John goes on to say, "perfect love casts out fear." But such

love does not exist between the leaders of the exclusionistic religious establishment and their Creator nor between them and other Christians, else they would not be afraid. And they *are* afraid. Fear, in the heart of the believer, is indeed the product of guilt—not guilty feelings, but genuine guilt, the sense of *being wrong,* of being out of order. The proper response to guilt is fear of judgment; but the proper response to that fearfulness is the question, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37), and the readiness to do it. But here is where arrogance deters. Conviction of being out of order with God there is, and fear there is, but readiness to repent there is not. Arrogant man seems to believe that, given his intellectual superiority and his threescore and ten, he can figure some way that does not involve repentance and confession. This indicates that his fear is not a healthy fear of God, but is morbid and cynical, betraying his hatred of God and himself.

So we see that the exclusionism (or exclusivism) which we usually deplore as petty and immature actually has its roots in a soul-sickness characterized by fear and hatred, both of which are ultimately directed to God Himself. The condition is that which we identify with Cain, with the brothers of Joseph, with Absolom, with Ahab and Jezebel, with Jonah, with Haman, with Herod, and with the Jewish politicians who nailed Jesus to the cross. We rightly so identify it.

The only cure is to elect, as did Saul on the Damascus road, simply and with finality, to let the Lord be Lord.

READER'S EXCHANGE

The Silent Majority

I am an average member of the church who fears that the average church member may not be so saved as he thinks he is.—*Texas*

Your journal "turns me on." I find it refreshing and exciting. Place me on your list of standing orders for the annual bound volume.—*Tennessee*

(This brother, however, is not so silent, for he has just issued his first number of *New Wine,* a personally written fold-sheet, neatly produced, that calls for new frontiers of thought. His effort is a good illustration of what we need more of. Write him and request a sample copy: Kyle Simplot, 309 S. Main, Erwin, Tn. 37650.)

Just keep the "refreshment" of *Restoration Review* coming. We are thrilled to read some of today's writing in your paper. And isn't it great the way Ralph Sweet has come alive! There may be hope for the church yet!!—*California*

How I long to be associated with someone or a group with viewpoints like yours. That viewpoint is not understood or tolerated in this area.—*West Virginia*

It's a big, wide, wonderful world, and I'm cheered that many of us in the Restoration community are finally finding it out.—*Colorado*

Keep up the good work and *please* continue to let love and concern be the basis from which you write . . . While my wife and I feel a great joy of freedom and growth in Jesus, there are some here who greatly oppose such freedom and growth. There is a good chance we will lose our support. This may be the best thing that could happen, but it is hard to break free from the organization due to "credit carditis" which has brought us into bondage to the monthly check. However, we know that everything will work out.—*one of our ministers*

I have been greatly blessed by the various articles that appear every issue, and I use them quite frequently for reference in our little church, for most of those attending do not have too much money, so we share a lot.—*Washington*

Thanks so much for your thought-provoking little paper. Only eternity will reveal the full extent of your impression, and I'm grateful for your patience to wait. For me patience is a hard virtue to come by. I'm trying not to quench the Spirit's fruit, but most times for me this is so hard. Were it not for the hope of His grace I would be totally lost in despair.—*Montana*

Concerning "The Unwelcomed Guest," did you not know that the Holy Spirit is dead? We would always be "sound" if each time we read a passage concerning the Holy Spirit we would add "but only through the Word." Like Dr. Fletcher says each of the Ten Commandments should be followed by the word "ordinarily."—*Nashville*

BOOK NOTES

The New English Bible, described in detail in our last number, is already a big seller. Our modest supply went quickly, but we have an order in for more. So we can fill your orders at 8.95. This is the "just published" new translation of both Testaments by the renowned committee of British scholars, destined to be one of the great translations of this century, and surely the most idiomatic.

Conquering and to Conquer is a treatment of the millennium by one of our brothers, Stanford Chambers, who is a premillennialist. It is a lucid, scriptural, and reasonable presentation of a very difficult part of the Bible, and a terribly neglected part. You might like to read for yourself what these brethren really believe about the book of Revelation. Only 2.00 in paperback.

Reverence for Life by Albert Schweitzer is a most fitting publication for these days when we are becoming more concerned with nature and our environment. Actually these are sermons by Schweitzer, "the 13th apostle," that speak directly to today's needs. The foreword is by Elton Trueblood, in which he says that the sermons reveal Schweitzer's deep spirituality, and that this comes through to our contemporary needs. 4.95 in hardback.

Explore Your Psychic World by Ambrose and Olga Worrall, a man and wife psychic team, is a book that will send you into outer space. It is daring, exploratory, and takes you into "the twilight zone." There is a chapter on "Shadows and Ghosts," and the whole thing is spooky. But once you read it you may change your mind about healing, ESP, and the spiritual universe. It *does* say something, and it is a Christian effort to understand, but don't buy it if you have to agree with most of what you read. 4.95 in hardback.